

## State Commission

Volunteer Mississippi's mission is to engage and support Mississippians of all ages and backgrounds in service to their communities. Established in 1994 as the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service, Volunteer Mississippi has worked to encourage a culture of citizenship, service and responsibility to America. In partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Center for Nonprofits, and faith-based and community organizations statewide, Volunteer Mississippi is fostering community engagement and building volunteer capacity throughout the state. During the 2014-2015 program year, the 11 AmeriCorps programs overseen by Volunteer Mississippi received 1,323 applications to fill 525 positions. AmeriCorps members serving in these programs recruited 8,051 volunteers who served 19,315 hours; tutored and mentored more than 7,000 students, refurbished 9 homes, transitioned 21 individuals from assisted living into independent community living, and earned \$1.2 million in education awards to help pay for college or pay back student loans.

## AmeriCorps State

Through the unique program design of America Reads Mississippi (ARM), the program was approached about a collaboration with the Mississippi Council on Economic Education to facilitate the Never Too Young Financial Curriculum in the 28 schools where ARM AmeriCorps members serve. The project was having difficulty getting established in local schools and the ARM program was a great vehicle for its introduction and implementation. The focus on literacy, personal finance, and economics fit in well with ARM and the school setting. The project uses literacy through reading booklets and books to convey a financial topics. Eighty-five AmeriCorps members presented ten weekly lessons to 933 K-3 students on these skills and to enhance their reading. ARM partnering schools were also engaged in the process by assisting and supporting ARM AmeriCorps members by helping them secure a location and a designated time for implementation. Many schools desire to continue the curriculum on their own by receiving facilitation training as well as using the skills that were taught for their own personal financial needs.

FoodCorps AmeriCorps members help students and their families gain knowledge, engagement, and access to healthy foods. Kids are bringing home stories, recipes, and vegetables to share with their parents and siblings. One AmeriCorps member reported a child requested the recipe for what the students had made the day before, saying his grandmother wanted to make it. Another student proudly informed a member that he had made a salad at home with his parents. One mother told a member that she was so excited that her son tried collards, noting that he has autism and doesn't usually try new foods. Collards are now on her grocery list.

## AmeriCorps National

FoodCorps has ten AmeriCorps members serving in Greenwood, Jackson, Oxford, Shelby, and Tupelo. FoodCorps is a nationwide team of AmeriCorps leaders who work under the direction of local partner organizations to connect children to real food and help them grow up healthy. They teach children hands-on lessons about food and nutrition build and tend school gardens, teach cooking lessons, and help change what's on lunch trays so that children can eat healthy food from local farms. In the past year, the FoodCorps members in Mississippi served 4,143 children, built or brought back into use 20 school and community gardens, harvested 765 pounds of produce, and recruited 640 community volunteers.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

Midtown Jackson is a low-income, inner-city neighborhood in the capital city that is plagued by chronic unemployment and low-performing public schools. An AmeriCorps VISTA project, "1 Campus 1 Community," builds collaborations with the Millsaps College community, Midtown residents, and social service providers to address community needs. The AmeriCorps VISTA members' efforts have helped improve student academic performance through Adopt-A-School projects they created at Brown Elementary School and Rowan Middle School. The members have raised more than \$50,000 in grants. They created and implemented a financial literacy curriculum to help people who live in poverty effectively manage their money, make sound financial decisions, navigate the banking system, and create a safety net of savings. The members have made a difference for well over a thousand students and Midtown residents. These and many new initiatives will continue in the coming year.

Delta State University Center for Community and Economic Development has been an AmeriCorps VISTA sponsor since 2003. The program has had a significant positive impact on the lives of community residents through its anti-poverty initiatives and its signature service projects. During this period, AmeriCorps VISTA members have recruited 11,237 community volunteers and trained them to assist 76,700 economically disadvantaged individuals across the Mississippi Delta region. Volunteers have helped with academic achievement, health education and healthy living, financial education, and job readiness. Members raised more than \$1,579,450 through grants, fundraisers, and in-kind donations of goods and services. During the summer program in 2015 alone, more than \$6,000 worth of donations was raised in eight weeks to provide 500 school supply bags and 25 boxes of supplies for summer programs at 12 community centers in the Delta.

## AmeriCorps NCCC

Residents of the Mississippi Delta town of Friars Point lack financial and many other resources. The town struggled to maintain its appearance, and there is little business in the area. An AmeriCorps NCCC team helped revitalize three of the town's buildings. The team completed a restoration project at the North Delta Museum at Friars Point. They removed old material from the exterior of the building, painted the exterior, and cleaned the interior, including displays. At historic Hirshberg's Store, the team cleaned display windows and gathered antiques to make a new display. Finally, the team painted the entire exterior of the town's maintenance shop. The members' service at these three public spaces improved the appearance of each building and its section of town, and members gained a new perspective on life in a rural, impoverished area. The project also inspired and informed discussions about the many difficulties that arise in revitalization efforts, giving members an increased understanding of the challenges related to extreme poverty.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team partnered with the Girl Scouts of Greater Mississippi to guide campers through the day. Members led or helped with group activities such as nature programs, STEM activities, arts and crafts, games, and sports. The Girl Scouts' mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. At Camp Iti Kana in Wiggins, and at Camp Wahi in Brandon, the team helped 465 K-12 students in an out-of-school program, planned and conducted 20 summer programs, and served 4,148 meals. The team also helped train 13 community youth leaders. The team was divided by gender into different roles while at camp. Both female and male corps members acted as program staff. Female corps members most often served as unit counselors, while male corps members worked with camp maintenance and kitchen staff. The team's service helped both camps with their three main initiatives for campers: Live Healthy, Lead Healthy, and STEM/Literacy.

## Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Oxford-Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit organization of businesses and individuals dedicated to preserving and promoting economic community development. The Foster Grandparent Program is considered to be a vital program in this effort to improve quality of life in the area. Foster Grandparents serve as mentors and role models for students at an alternative school and seven elementary schools. In each school system, many students are reading below grade level. The 87 Foster Grandparents make a real difference for the students, helping them learn to read at appropriate levels. They also help students prepare for the GED exam, help Head Start children with pre-reading skills, and help people with intellectual disabilities maintain or improve their skill level.

## Senior Corps RSVP

Before Hurricane Katrina nearly wiped the cities of Waveland and Bay St. Louis off the map, 500 RSVP volunteers actively served there. Today RSVP has been able to recruit back 127 volunteers. RSVP volunteers staff an American Red Cross disaster evacuation shelter in Hancock County. They participate in all mandatory Red Cross training and are available to staff the shelter when called upon by the Gulf Coast Chapter. They sign in all shelter evacuees, communicate with the Red Cross to request meal delivery, and enforce shelter rules during the emergency events. Veterans and military families participate in the "R-U-OK?" program, in which RSVP volunteers help seniors live independently. In the "Handy Man Brigade" program, experienced, skilled volunteers perform light to heavy home repairs for people who need assistance. The local food pantry is staffed by, and under the direction of, RSVP volunteers. It serves more than 10,000 citizens each year. Funding for this RSVP program is supplemented each year by \$71,000 in local resources, including cash and in-kind support.

## Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is investing in the Mississippi Delta Workforce Funding Collaborative, which provides job seekers with services so they can get jobs in industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, and transportation. The Social Innovation Fund transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities.

## Volunteer Generation Fund

With its Volunteer Generation Fund grant, the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service will strengthen the state's ability to engage more citizens in meaningful volunteer service and build capacity in more nonprofit organizations through the expansion the volunteer center network. Over the next three years MCVS will continue strengthening current infrastructures and initiate at least three new Volunteer Centers that will expand outreach to unserved, highly populated areas that also have a large concentration of nonprofit organizations. Through the expanded volunteer center network, MCVS will significantly increase the number of meaningful volunteer engagements to at least 80,000, and increase the number of nonprofit organizations who benefit from capacity-building services to at least 900 in the first year. Efforts will include a significant increase in the number of skill-based volunteers, as well as progressive increase in volunteer retention rates and nonprofits implementing effective management practices as a result of capacity-building services.